

## **Transcription of June 9, 2008 3:30 PM media availability**

**[0:00] GOV:** Let me just say that a lot of excellent work continues. I have spoken with the Lieutenant Governor who has been in Jackson County and headed toward Elnora. There too water has receded quickly which is good. The number of people needing shelter for the moment is down substantially, but on the other hand the weather map says it's already raining in parts of the affected area and perhaps quite heavily. I am told we will know a lot more tomorrow morning after one or perhaps two lines of storms move through whether this problem has been aggravated a lot or just a little. Fortunately, the interval has allowed for some excellent work by the Guard and others of a preventative nature. Very major sandbagging operations have been undertaken at places that could become vulnerable and so I want to thank all of those who have cooperated in that effort. We may not know, but it's entirely possible, that a town or area has been saved by this quick and preventative and protective action. I am advised by DNR that at the top of their worry list is a lot of the private dam and levies that we have. The state inspects these on a regular basis and orders their repair very frequently, but the biggest exposure we have right now is on private property and we are monitoring those very carefully. We expect to have headquarters set up in the affected areas where citizens can begin to get their questions answered and at the appropriate time, applications for assistance. We are going to do everything we can to make those as user friendly and complete so that citizens who have been through a lot will have as straightforward and navigable a process as possible. Many citizens will be seeking more than one kind of aid, or more than one kind of question to be answered, and we are going to do all that we can to make that easy for them. Questions?

**[2:22] Question:** Of the expected weather that is hitting, how much do you think it will set you back in some areas?

**[2:32] GOV:** Ask again in the morning.

**[2:37] Question:** What are the worst areas at the moment and where have you seen the most improvement?

**[2:45] GOV:** Joe, do you want to try? Again, I will say that a consistent observation that I have had and the report that I have had from other places is that just as this particular event happened very suddenly it receded very quickly which at least gave us the opportunity for some cleanup and a chance to catch our breath and the chance to do some preventative work before perhaps more water arrives. But do you want to differentiate between any of these areas?

**[3:18] Joe Wainscott, Indiana Department of Homeland Security:** Well, predominantly some of our problems where we are working on preventative work are along the Wabash and the White Rivers. A couple areas where we are working really hard is around Elnora as the governor said, Daviess County, Edwardsport and Oaktown in Knox County. We are looking in

Worthington which is in Greene County and Hazelton in Gibson County, we are working on a number of issues there that we are concerned about. Obviously some of the levees along the Wabash and the East Fork of the White River are of a high concern for us. As far as improvements, Brown County a damage assessment is underway. Obviously the Red Cross is reporting lower numbers in their shelters. They advised me that at the peak there were about 1,200 folks being sheltered which, in their estimation and memory, has to be about the highest number we have had to shelter in Indiana during a disaster. The number is now down to just over 300 from the night before.

**[4:36] Question:** Governor what went into your decision to stay and not to go to Japan?

**[4:40] GOV:** It was not reached lightly. A lot of good people had done a ton of work to prepare for that trip. There may be only one thing more important to us than bringing more jobs to Hoosiers and that's public safety. I recognize that it's a close call and some could legitimately question the judgment, but it seemed to me this morning with the prospect that we are not past this event, that there could be more rain, we don't know, but there was a reasonable possibility of that, it seemed to me that my place was here.

**[5:20] Question:** [Regarding Worthington being cut off]

**[5:29] Joe Wainscott, Indiana Department of Homeland Security:** My latest information, Worthington is right now the only one of that nature that we have confirmed. We delivered some supplies to them by air, and it looks like one of the roads may be opening up as the water recedes here soon.

**[5:45] Question:** Was that town [Worthington] evacuated?

**[5:48] Joe Wainscott, Indiana Department of Homeland Security:** No it was not. It was cut off due to being surrounded by water.

**[6:08] Question:** Can you elaborate on what the goal is of the Department of Correction?

**[6:13] GOV:** They are filling a lot of sand bags over at Terre Haute. The General advised me earlier that we are keeping them mainly to indoor work. This is not new by the way. The Department of Corrections has been very, very innovative in the last few years, and has worked with a lot of local governments on maintenance and grass cutting and things like this. I will say that this manpower has been very, very handy on previous occasions and I know it is again.

**[6:56] Question:** What does expedited disaster relief mean to the average Hoosier?

**[7:01] GOV:** Well it meant things like immediate water, equipment like pumps, things like this, even ahead of the complete formal declaration which we expect. There are certain items which can be made available instantly, and were made available instantly by the President's approval of that.

**[7:23] Question:** Regarding the interstate system: Is there any place that still has water over it? Is there damage? Are there places where there will have to be fixes?

**[7:34] GOV:** I figured you'd ask that—we've got the whole darn government here except INDOT! Does the Department of Insurance want to speak to the condition of our Interstate...? We'll get back to you—I'll get somebody to call you.

**[7:54] Question:** Are there any dollar damage estimates yet?

**[7:58] GOV:** I think it's a little soon. First concern—protection of life; second—protection of property; third—sheltering and caring for people; fourth—totaling up the score. We'll do it as fast as we can.

**[8:15] Question:** [Regarding estimates of homes damaged]

**[8:21] GOV:** Not yet. There will be lots of zeroes here.

**[8:24] Question:** Is it fair to say we are talking thousands of property owners with damage?

**[8:36] GOV:** Safe to say, yes.

**[8:39] Question:** How would you assess the state's performance over the past few days?

**[8:44] GOV:** I have enormous admiration for these folks, and citizens should too. Our expectations are very high in a moment like this. Not just for the performance of each unit, but for their coordination. It's my expectation that there will never be a moment lost to disagreement or turf battles or questions about whether agency A responds to Agency B. I'm happy to say that I've seen great coordination. I think we are getting steadily better at this, and I really want to commend the leadership of the departments for the way they are operating under our new Department of Homeland Security unified command structure. The question has come up before—when we are past this we will do an after-action assessment as usual and I don't doubt we will identify a place where we could have done better. But at this stage, everything I have seen—and I've seen a lot of it first hand—says that folks are not only working very hard, but they are working together very hard, which is in some ways the most important thing.

**[9:56] Question:** [Regarding agriculture]

**[10:04] GOV:** I guess that's what you call a prompt. (Laughter) I thought I'd say a few things about agricultural land. (Laughter) Well, there's a completely separate—obviously we've experienced a lot of damage there, too. I was hoping the commissioner would step up—Andy Miller—would give me some encouragement that some of the fields that I saw flooded one day and were back above water the next day might be recoverable but he's pessimistic about that. There's another category of assistance we've applied for that will help our farmers. Andy, do you want to say anything further about that?

**[10:47] Andy Miller, Department of Agriculture:** No, other than that we are watching it very closely. We talked to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture today. The teams are deployed to assess the damages, and it will be one of those that next probably week we'll know a lot more than we do today.

**[11:05] Question:** [Regarding flood-related deaths]

**[11:11] GOV:** Two and one unconfirmed, is that our latest count? Two.

**[11:14] Question:** Are there health concerns that you shift to now as the rain slows up in terms of wells and whatnot? It seems like there's been an effort to get the message out there.

**[11:22] GOV:** I know of a couple of the places where I went where so far we believe the water is fine. I personally encourage people to be very careful. If they have access to water they know is safe—either bottled or boiled—to use and to take no chances. But we're trying to err on the side of making lots and lots of safe water available just to avoid any unforeseen problem.

**[11:59] Question:** Can you give us any details on the fatalities?

**[12:03] GOV:** One in a car and one on his own boat, I'm told, was not as I understand it, was not in the process of flight, or rescue, or evacuation. It was just an unfortunate mishap as he went out to check on his own equipment and he slipped and fell or otherwise was trapped in the water.

**[12:33] Question:** Are you going to talk about asking folks to leave lines of communication open with local law enforcement...not flooding 9-1-1, but small stuff?

**[12:45] Joe Wainscott, Homeland Security:** I think it has improved slightly, but I will ask that all of you remind folks to please not call emergency services with non-emergency questions. There are other places—Web sites and so forth—that can help you. But our responders need those lines and need to be able to pay attention to life-safety issues.

**[13:10] GOV:** Since you mentioned it, I'll just report if I wasn't clear elsewhere, that to my knowledge, there were no law and order problems last night. We had a few the night before and the state police responded and were backed up by some personnel from the Guard. My checking last night and again this morning, as far as I'm aware we had no looting and no law and order problems and we'll try to make sure that that remains that case.

**[13:40] Question:** A couple of years ago the legislature created the emergency fund. Do you expect to have to use any of that money to help in this disaster?

**[13:52] GOV:** Too soon to say. I asked for that because I thought there ought to be some last resort stop gap. And that's exactly what it is. It's not that much, so we'll just see. But an event of this magnitude should bring—it's not for me to say—but I feel rather confident saying that it should bring into play the full array of assistance from our fellow tax payers through the federal government. And we certainly hope and expect that the insurance companies will step up to their

responsibility in full as in fairness they really have in the past. Jim's department will have a line available if anyone feels their company is not fulfilling its responsibilities under a policy. But if those things all happen, then we may not need to go to that resort. I should also add that the private donations which are already coming in, both in kind and in cash, will also go a long way towards making people whole.

**[15:08] Question:** Governor how do you put this in perspective with folks who haven't seen this first hand as you are traveling? To express the magnitude of what we're seeing throughout the state?

**[15: 20] GOV:** If pictures tell a thousand words, this takes more than a thousand. There has been some great, stunning photography, but I'm not sure if any of it captures the extent of the damage. And nothing can capture, I don't think, the heartache that you only sense when you are able to sit with people who've been through it. Again, I think the state may have seen individual incidents in the past that were also terribly devastating, but I don't know that we've had a string of them in a short number of days quite the like of this. My history is not good enough to tell you when.

**[16:04] Question:** It sounds like most of the preparations, concern is over in Daviess, Greene County, Knox County, so I assume that means the water is sort of heading southwest. This just shows my ignorance of how this all works.

**[16:18] GOV:** That's where gravity sends it.

**[16:21] Question:** But it's not going straight south, it's sort of southwest, is that right—it's the Wabash and down the Ohio.

**[16:28] GOV:** If you look at the—not to tease—if you look at the maps, you'll sort of see where the main tributaries go, and I guess that's why our map of concern looks like that too. But again, we'll know a lot more in the morning. Let's see how much rain falls, and where it falls, and how quickly it falls, and if that could quickly change, as it has so far, the places of most emphasis.

**[16:55] Question:** Do have a toll on the number of people who have been displaced...Or a ballpark?

**[17:02] Joe Wainscott Homeland Security:** We know that there are 1,200 in shelters, so obviously it's far in excess of that because of the number of folks in shelter with family or friends.

**[17:11] GOV:** Yeah. Mike, we just don't know. All I can tell you is for every person I talk to in a shelter—First of all, most of them are already making plans to get to family or friends or some other place, and for every such person I ran into two or three who had already secured that. The

last place most folks want to go to is a shelter and it's the kind of state where, as always, families helping families, friends helping friends, strangers helping strangers.

**[17:43] Question:** You said 1,200 in shelters?

**[17:46] GOV:** No. That was previous night. That's probably down by three fourths, for the moment at least.

**[17:53] Question:** Those people who are still in shelters...are those concentrated in integral areas, or are those scattered all over?

**[18:00] GOV:** Not sure...

**[18:01] Homeland Security:** Most of Martinsville, and I believe Columbus.

**[18:08] Question:** Are we on target to shatter the hundred year flood record?

**[18:14] Homeland Security:** Other person: That's hard to say...

**[18:16] GOV:** It's not our goal. (laughter). You know, we like breaking records in this administration; that's not one that's been on our target list. So, alright, we'll be back with more when we have more. Thank you.